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291031Z Jun 01

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	DCP-01	NRRC-00
	NSAE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	R-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-01	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9206
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 002042

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR BISA WILLIAMS
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL. 06/26/11

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE TIGHTENS THE POLITICAL NOOSE

REF: HARARE 1987

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CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES AUBREY HOOKS. REASONS: 1.5
(B) AND (D).

MOYO'S REMARKS, CONTROVERSIAL AS ALWAYS

1. (U) ON JUNE 25, INFORMATION MINISTER JONATHAN MOYO ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE WILL SOON PROHIBIT NGOS, CHURCHES, AND AID AGENCIES FROM CONDUCTING VOTER EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS. ACCORDING TO MOYO, THE GOZ IS DEVISING A POLICY THAT WILL PERMIT ONLY THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED ELECTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMISSION AND POLITICAL PARTIES TO CARRY OUT VOTER EDUCATION EFFORTS.

REACTION

2. (U) NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE NGO COMMUNITY HAS REACTED ANGRILY TO MOYO'S ANNOUNCEMENT. A GROUP OF 15 CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS ISSUED A STATEMENT INSISTING IT WAS THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO INFORM VOTERS ABOUT ELECTORAL LAWS AND THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES. IN THEIR STATEMENT, "THE GROUPS REJECT UNRESERVEDLY ANY ALLEGATIONS THAT THE VOTER EDUCATION PROVIDED BY CIVIC GROUPS IS PARTISAN AND CALL ON THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY TO RETRACT THIS UNSUBSTANTIATED AND MALEVOLENT ALLEGATION. THE GROUPS WILL TAKE ALL MEASURES TO DEFEND THEIR LEGAL AND SOCIAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITY TO INFORM AND EDUCATE THE PUBLIC." THE LEGAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION (LRF) IS AN INFLUENTIAL, WELL-RESPECTED NGO WHICH RUNS A NUMBER OF LEGAL AID CLINICS AROUND THE COUNTRY AND IS ONE OF THE MANY ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN VOTER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES. IN A STRONGLY-WORDED PRESS RELEASE ON JUNE 27, THE

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LRF ASSERTED THAT ANY LAW WHICH PURPORTED TO PREVENT CIVIC GROUPS FROM CONDUCTING VOTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS WOULD BE OVERTURNED BY THE COURTS. THE LRF EMPHASIZED THAT NGOS AND CHURCHES HAVE LONG SPONSORED NON-PARTISAN CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ZIMBABWE AND SHOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO. A JUNE 29 EDITORIAL IN THE INDEPENDENT "DAILY NEWS" SLAMMED MOYO'S ANNOUNCEMENT: "OF ALL THE MANY PARANOID MEASURES THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN IN ITS FUTILE ATTEMPT TO STOP THE FIERCE WINDS OF POLITICAL CHANGE THAT HAVE BEEN BLOWING ACROSS THE COUNTRY SINCE THE REJECTION OF THE FRAUDULENT DRAFT CONSTITUTION IN FEBRUARY LAST YEAR, NONE HAS BEEN QUITE SO GLARINGLY UNDEMOCRATIC AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL AS THIS ONE."

COMMENT

3. (C) DURING THE TWENTY-ONE YEARS SINCE INDEPENDENCE, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN THE PRINCIPAL IMPLEMENTERS OF VOTER EDUCATION. THEY HAVE FOCUSED ON TECHNICAL/PROCEDURAL ISSUES SUCH AS THE IMPORTANCE OF REGISTERING TO VOTE AND VERIFYING THAT ONE'S NAME IS ON THE VOTERS ROLL; THE MECHANICS OF MARKING ONE'S

BALLOT AND PLACING IT IN THE BOX; AND EMPHASIS ON THE SECRECY OF THE BALLOT. THESE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN CRUCIAL IN ELEVATING THE AWARENESS OF CITIZENS ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, A PREREQUISITE FOR THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY. IT IS NOT SURPRISING, THEREFORE, THAT ZANU-PF INTENDS TO ASSERT ITS CONTROL OVER THIS EXERCISE, AS IGNORANCE HAS PROVEN TO BE THE RULING PARTY'S BEST WEAPON IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO CLING TO POWER. THE PROVISION OF VOTER EDUCATION BY NEUTRAL ORGANIZATIONS THREATENS ZANU-PF'S MOST EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS: BEATING OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS, THREATENING THEM WITH VIOLENCE IF THEY DO NOT VOTE FOR THE RULING PARTY, AND TELLING
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CITIZENS THE PARTY IS ABLE TO DETERMINE FOR WHOM THEY CAST THEIR BALLOTS.

14. (C) MOYO'S WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW POLITICAL PARTIES TO CONDUCT VOTER EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS UNDERMINES HIS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN TOO PARTISAN IN THEIR EFFORTS. MOYO LIKELY ASSUMES, HOWEVER, THAT THE BAN ON FOREIGN FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES WILL, IN PRACTICAL TERMS, MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE OPPOSITION MDC TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY NGOS. WE EXPECT THAT CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS WILL FIERCELY RESIST THE GOZ ON THIS ISSUE AND IGNORE A BAN IF NECESSARY, BUT A GOVERNMENT PROHIBITION WILL MAKE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR SUCH GROUPS TO OPERATE, PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS. AS THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION EXPECTED IN EARLY 2002 APPROACHES, WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT ZANU-PF WILL COME UP WITH OTHER CREATIVE MEASURES DESIGNED TO MAINTAIN ITS HOLD ON POWER.

HOOKS

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